DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 405 754 HE 029 987

AUTHOR Miller, Michael T.
TITLE Process and Task Orientations of Faculty Governance Leaders.
PUB DATE [96]
NOTE 17p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Faculty; *College Governing Councils; Decision Making; *Faculty College Relationship; *Governance; Higher Education; *Leadership Styles; *Motivation; National Surveys; Skills; Universities
IDENTIFIERS *Faculty Attitudes

ABSTRACT

This study examined the attitudes of faculty senate leaders concerning the role of faculty in university governance, their own motivations for becoming involved in governance, and their leadership styles. A survey questionnaire was developed and mailed to 100 faculty governance leaders at research and doctoral institutions. Nearly half of the 78 respondents indicated that they held their faculty status in the liberal arts or humanities, followed by science and education. Just over two-thirds were male, and 86 percent were tenured. Respondents agreed or strongly agreed that an ideal governance process utilizes a faculty advisory board as a conduit through which faculty participation is solicited and that institutional procedures involve faculty input early in the decision-making process. Respondents identified five factors which they agreed most strongly with as the motivation for their willingness to be involved in governance activities: empowerment, sense of responsibility, importance of decision-making, being asked to serve, and sense of professionalism. It was found that regardless of whether faculty governance leaders were more process orientated or task oriented, they perceived the same skills as necessary for effective leadership: judgment, oral communication, organizational ability, written communication, and leadership. (MDM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 405 754

Process and Task Orientations of Faculty Governance Leaders

Dr. Michael T. Miller
Assistant Professor
Higher Education Administration Program
University of Alabama
206 Wilson Hall
Tuscaloosa, AL 35487
(205) 348-1170
FAX: (205) 348-2161
e-mail: mmiller@bamaed.ua.edu

Running Head: Leader Orientation

HE 029 987

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Michael T. Miller

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

Abstract

Despite their ambiguity, faculty governance units, typically referred to as "senates" or "councils," play an important role in the effective operation of higher education institutions. The individuals who operate and lead these governance units, however, are rarely studied. As the result of a national study of 100 faculty senate leaders, the current study provides baseline data on these leaders. Survey results revealed that they generally believe that faculty should have early input into institutional decision making, perceive their own involvement as based on empowerment, responsibility, and the importance of decision making, and see judgement, oral communication skills, and organizational ability as the primary skills needed for leading a faculty governance unit.

Faculty involvement in governance has historically taken many forms, and has caused a great deal of anxiety and stress for both faculty and administrators alike. Despite this discomfort in sharing authority, involvement by a variety of participants in institutional governance has the potential to greatly add to the effectiveness, productivity, and quality of academic programs and business operations. Faculty participation in the governance process has been viewed as essential to effective administration, dependent upon several factors, including the administrative leadership styles of those who have the ability to involve faculty, the culture of the institution which may or may not solicit or encourage faculty participation, the beliefs and values of trustees and those serving on governing boards which relate to the sharing of authority by administrators, and the legal interpretation set forth by the university concerning the Connick v. Meyer and Knight v. Minnesota legal decisions (Miles, 1987).

Regardless of the institution's independent culture, current public demands for institutional accountability and effectiveness warrant college and university consideration of consensus development activities. These activities are often found in the use of a senate, council, or faculty advisory committee. Gilmour (1993) reported that over 90% of the institutions he surveyed had some formal faculty governance body. Consistent with the modelling suggested by

Birnbaum (1991), faculty participation in governance may largely be a result, or alternatively a defining criterion, of institutional mission, culture, and the perceived role of faculty by administrators. Birnbaum identified the collegial institution governance model, inclusive of those institutions whose primary focus is teaching and is typified as the undergraduate liberal arts institution, as a personification of the methods and procedures possible for shared authority. Conversely, Baldridge (1982) argued that such an ideal setting where faculty meet in friendly environments to debate academic standards, policy, and administrative operations has never existed in the realm of higher education. He went on to refer to an ideal setting of true shared authority as a "fable" and "kingdom" which has been advocated by many but successfully implemented by few.

The American private sector has embraced the concept of participatory management with much excitement and publicity, emphasizing quality circles and employee empowerment. And although managers have realized greater effectiveness by sharing "power" among employees, others have argued that requiring more of front-line employees is a mechanism for requiring more work without subsequent pay differentials, increases in benefits or titles, or little protection from results of inaccurate or unproductive decision results (Kameras, 1996).

Although the controversies over involving faculty in decision-making have proven to be somewhat cyclical in nature, demonstrated by Kerr's (1991) observation over faculty empowerment in the early-1970's and a rebirth in the late-1980's and 1990's, the current study was conducted assuming that regardless of the need for faculty involvement, the very issue demands greater attention from both professional and scholarly communities. The purpose for conducting the current study was to identify the primary orientation of faculty governance unit leaders, and utilize this orientation as a basis for comparison of motivations for involvement and the skills required to serve as faculty leader.

Benefits and Barriers to Shared Governance

Higher education's capacity to involve faculty and other constituencies in governance and administration has proven to be both creative and problematic. From the standpoint of administrators, the extra time needed for decision-making as well as the methods for involvement often prove cumbersome. Alternatively, administrators and faculty alike find comfort, power, and effectiveness in the sharing of decision-making on issues of major concern to the institution.

The institutional benefits of involving faculty in the governance process include greater personal investment by

faculty in the work they do and are expected to do, greater organizational commitment, more and a wider selection of options developed due to the increased number of actors involved in creating solutions to difficult problems, more open and creative communication among faculty and administrators, and within faculty groups, stronger dedication to the workplace, and even better teaching, research, and service being performed.

Barriers to involving faculty, however, exist in many shapes and forms, including trust among faculty groups, faculty and administrators, and among administrators who attempt to involve faculty, increased requests for commitment and work production without corresponding increases in compensation, over-workload requests which leads to burnout among talented faculty willing to get involved, the abilities of faculty and administrators working in areas they may be unfamiliar with, and the commitment to additional time for making decisions and implementing these decisions. A growing concern for many institutions has been identified as the legal perception placed on faculty involvement. As Miles (1987) indicated, faculty have been greatly restricted in the amount of involvement they can have, and afforded involvement only through the willingness of administrators to allow for the sharing of authority. Miles indicated that the Knight v. Minnesota decision and the Connick v. Meyer decision both

have dictated that faculty have no legal right to involvement, and in fact, have a much more limited scope of "academic freedom" than many faculty believe to be the case. Such an instance is problematic, as Miles argued, in that faculty do not even have the legal right to alter course curricula, syllabi, or question administrative decisions.

Design and Methods

Data for the current study were collected as part of the National Data Base on Faculty Involvement in Governance (NDBFIG) project at The University of Alabama. This institutionally-funded initiative has provided for the collection of data relative to shared authority in higher education, and the current project was designed to be the initial phase of investigating faculty senate leaders.

A researcher-developed survey instrument was created based on the literature of both academic citizenship and administration, with special attention provided to the motivations for faculty to be involved in governance activities. The instrument was mailed during the early-fall of the 1996-1997 academic year to a random sample of 100 faculty governance unit leaders in research and doctoral granting universities. The sample size of 100 was determined to be appropriate due to the exploratory nature of the study, as well as Alreck and Settle's (1985) contention that the size is adequate to develop generalizations to larger populations.

The survey instrument contained four sections of questions. The first section dealt with demographic information, including discipline, faculty status, gender, governance unit culture, orientation, and perceived tasks. The second section dealt with the characteristics of an ideal governance structure, a primary component of other survey research conducted by NDBFIG. The third and fourth sections of the survey included items to be rated on a 1-to-5 Likert-type (1=Strong disagreement with an item and 5=Strong agreement with an item) scale related to motivation for involvement and skills needed to lead a faculty governance body, respectively. The instrument was developed in the spring and summer of 1996, and validated with both the NDBFIG directors and faculty senate leaders from participating institutions.

Findings

Nearly half of the 78 survey respondents indicated that they held their faculty status in the Liberal Arts or Humanities (47%), followed by faculty reporting Science (17%) and Education (13%). Of the respondents, 86% reported holding tenure at the Full or Associate Professor level. Just over two-thirds of the respondents were males (67%), and the majority indicated that they perceived their faculty senate to be primarily collegial in nature (63%). Other respondents indicated their perception that their academic governance unit was bureaucratic (13%) or political (9%).

In terms of the faculty governance body leader, 51% reported they perceived their role to be driven by a process orientation, and 45% indicated they perceived their role as having a task orientation.

Respondents agreed to strongly agreed that an ideal governance process is comprised of the utilization of a faculty advisory board as a conduit through which faculty participation is solicited (mean rating 4.25) and institutional procedures involve faculty input early in the decision making process (mean rating 4.25). Respondents had the lowest level of agreement with the use of neutral consultants being utilized to mediate faculty-administration disagreements (mean rating 2.92; see Table 1).

The third section of the survey requested that respondents rate on a 1-to-5 (1=Strongly Disagree; 5=Strongly Agree) Likert-type scale their agreement levels of select motivational factors for their involvement. Responding faculty leaders identified five factors which they agreed most strongly with as the motivation for their willingness to be involved in co-governance activities. The primary factors included: empowerment (mean rating 4.58), sense of responsibility (mean rating 4.33), importance of decision-making (mean rating 4.18), being asked to serve (mean rating 4.17), and sense of professionalism (mean rating 4.01; see Table 2).

The final section of the survey instrument provided an opportunity for faculty governance leaders to rate their agreement with a series of skills possibly required to effectively lead an academic senate, council, or governance body. Utilizing the same 1-to-5 Likert-type scale as in the previous section of the survey, respondents agreed to strongly agreed with 9 of the 11 skills identified. The skills with the highest mean ratings were judgement (4.49), oral communication (4.40), organizational ability (4.36), written communication (4.31), and leadership (4.31; see Table 3).

Of particular interest in the current investigation was the need to delineate the difference between those faculty governance leaders who perceived a process orientation as compared to a task orientation. As such, the data were stratified to allow for a comparison of mean ratings between the orientation perception and the perceived skills required for leading a governance body. The results of a one-way ANOVA indicated no significant differences at an alpha level of .05 (see Table 3), thus revealing that regardless of orientation, faculty governance leaders perceive the same skills as necessary for effective leadership.

Discussion

The role of faculty in the governance process increasingly has a place in higher education institutions as their leaders struggle with issues of public accountability,

decreased and stable funding patterns, and a changing client and labor base. As such, the involvement of faculty in collaborative decision making allows for both greater and creative input into decisions, while developing a broader base of inclusive feelings among all ranks of faculty.

With this increased importance of faculty co-governance, the leader of the governance unit plays an important role. Findings of the current research indicate that the senate or council chair or president is a male holding the rank of Associate or Full Professor. These leaders primarily see themselves as having a process orientation, indicating that they see themselves as the individuals responsible for allowing faculty to speak out and make known their ideas, concerns, and beliefs. Many of these leaders, however, also see themselves as having a task orientation, indicating attention to arranging and scheduling meetings, calling for votes, and distributing information such as agendas, institutional data, and meeting minutes.

Despite the contrasting leadership styles of process and task orientations, leaders participating in the study noted their motivation for involvement as being a quest for empowerment and to fulfill a sense of responsibility. As such, these motivating factors reinforce the concept that faculty desire a strong voice and participation in governance for a multitude of reasons.

Also, faculty leaders agree that a number of skills are necessary for leading a faculty governance unit. Ironically, little literature has been developed along these lines, and that which does exist takes the form of personal narratives and recommendations of best practice. No professional development activities have been noted in the literature as advocating the skills needed for faculty governance operations.

The current study provides very basic baseline data on the leaders of faculty senates and councils. Although the data and findings do begin an important dialogue about the process of involvement, the results also begin to demonstrate who the individuals are who take on the responsibility of serving as first among equals in the academy. Further research into who these leaders are and the roles they take is much needed, and only in so doing will the dialogue about faculty trust and responsibility move beyond the literature base and into the decision making process.

References

Alreck, P., & Settle, R. (1985). The survey research handbook. Homewood, IL: Irwin.

Baldridge, J. V. (1982). Shared governance: A fable about the lost magic kingdom. Academe, 68(1), 12-15.

Birnbaum, R. (1991). The latent organizational functions of the academic senate: Why senates do not work but will not go away. In R. Birnbaum (Ed.) Faculty in Governance: The Role of Senates and Joint Committees in Academic Decision Making. New Directions for Higher Education Report 75 (pp. 1-25). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Gilmour, J. E. (1991). Participative governance bodies in higher education: Report of a national study. In R. Birnbaum (Ed.) Faculty in Governance: The role of Senate and Joint Committees in Academic Decision Making. New Directions for Higher Education Report 75 (pp. 27-40). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Kameras, D. (1996). Teamsters cry foul over UPS team concept. AFL-CIO News, 41(4), 5.

Kerr, C. (1991). The great transformation in higher education. Albany, NY: State University of New York.

Miles, A. S. (1987). College law. Tuscaloosa, AL: Sevgo.

Table 1.

Characteristics of an Ideal Governance Process

Characteristic	Mean	Std Dev	Variance	N
Institutional procedures involve faculty input early in the decision making process	4.24	1.12	1.26	77
The faculty advisory board is utilized as a conduit through which faculty participation is solicited	4.25	.93	.53	75
Faculty members are adequately rewarded for their participation in the governance process	3.49	1.16	1.36	75
Faculty are empowered to question policy decisions through a well articulated process	3.44	1.20	1.46	77
Neutral consultants are utilized to mediate faculty-administration disagreements	2.92	1.08	1.18	75

Table 2.

Motivation for Faculty Leader Involvement

Factor	Mean	Std Dev	Variance	N
Empowerment	4.58	.59	.35	77
Sense of responsibility	4.33	.66	.43	78
Importance of decision-making	4.18	.81	.66	76
Asked to serve	4.17	.80	.64	77
Sense of professionalism	4.01	.75	.57	77
Sense of ownership	3.91	.87	.76	78
Environment of the campus	3.74	1.04	1.08	78
Relationship with administration	3.63	1.06	1.12	78
Communal atmosphere	3.61	1.17	1.38	75
Gaining rewards (external)	3.49	1.17	1.36	75
Attitude toward students	3.42	1.03	1.05	78
Quest for knowledge	3.29	1.07	1.15	78
Self-interest	3.03	1.12	1.26	77
Job security	2.45	1.23	1.52	78

Table 3.

Skills Required to be a Faculty Governance Body Leader and ANOVA F-Scores

Skill	Mean	Std Dev	Var	N	F
Judgement	4.49	.70	.49	77	.2442
Oral Communication	4.40	.57	.32	78	.7045
Organizational Ability	4.36	.62	.39	78	.6781
Written Communication	4.31	.73	.53	78	.9498
Leadership	4.31	.69	.48	78	.9298
Educational Values	4.28	.95	.91	78	.1403
Stress Tolerance	4.26	.73	.53	78	.3763
Problem Analysis	4.21	.80	.63	78	.6744
Sensitivity	4.10	.94	.88	77	.3585
Decisiveness	3.96	.71	.50	78	.4933
Range of Interests	3.74	.89	.79	78	.7314